

**Elise C. Breitfeld**  
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Psychology Department  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

## EDUCATION

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2020 – Present	<b>University of Wisconsin-Madison</b> <i>Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology, expected May 2026</i> <i>M.S. in Developmental Psychology, 2022</i>
2016 – 2020	<b>Princeton University</b> <i>B.A. in Psychology</i> Summa cum laude Certificates: Cognitive Science, Linguistics, and Neuroscience

## GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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2024 – 2026	F31 NICHD Fellowship (F31HD115328): Environmental Context in Early Semantic Network Development
2023 – 2024	Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship – Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2020 – 2021	University Fellowship – University Wisconsin-Madison
2019	Princeton Cognitive Science Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship
2017 & 2018	Pitts Undergraduate Research Fund Award – Princeton University

## HONORS AND AWARDS

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2024	UW-Madison Award for Mentoring Undergraduates in Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activities
2023	Psychology Department Distinguished Service Award – University of Wisconsin-Madison
2022	Society for Language Development Student Award
2020	Howard Crosby Warren Senior Prize in Psychology – Princeton University
2019	Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society
2019	Howard Crosby Warren Junior Prize in Psychology – Princeton University
2017	Shapiro Prize for Academic Excellence – Princeton University

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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2020 – Present	<b>Infant Learning Lab   Ph.D. Candidate</b> <i>University Wisconsin-Madison</i> Advisor: Dr. Jenny Saffran
2017 – 2020	<b>Princeton Baby Lab   Honors Thesis Student</b> <i>Princeton University</i> Advisor: Dr. Casey Lew-Williams
2018	<b>Bergelson Lab   Research Assistant</b> <i>Duke University</i> Advisor: Dr. Erika Bergelson
2017	<b>Developmental Social Neuroscience Lab   Research Assistant</b> <i>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</i> Advisor: Dr. Eva Telzer
2015	<b>Wilbourn Infant Lab   Research Assistant</b> <i>Duke University</i> Advisor: Dr. Makeba Wilbourn

## PUBLICATIONS

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Published	<b>Breitfeld, E. &amp; Saffran, J. (2025).</b> Environmental context scaffolds children’s semantic representation of novel words. <i>Cognition</i> , 262, 106162.
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	<p><b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> *Compton, A., &amp; Saffran, J. (2024). Toddlers’ prior social experience with speakers influences their word learning. <i>Infancy</i>, 29(5), 771-788.</p> <p>* Student mentee, co-first author</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (2024). Early word learning is influenced by physical environments. <i>Child Development</i>, 93(3), 962-971.</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> Potter, C., &amp; Lew-Williams, C. (2021). Children simultaneously learn multiple dimensions of information during shared book reading. <i>Journal of Cognition and Development</i>, 22(5), 744-766.</p> <p>Garrison, H., Baudet, G., <b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> &amp; Bergelson, E. (2020). Familiarity plays a small role in noun comprehension at 12-18 months. <i>Infancy</i>, 25(4), 458-477.</p>
In Prep	<p><b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> *Snoberger, C., &amp; Saffran, J. (in prep). The impact of peer behavior on preschoolers’ word learning.</p> <p>* Student mentee, co-first author</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (in prep). Environmental context as a cue to toddlers’ semantic associations between words.</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (in prep). Environmental context as a cue to broad category labels.</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (in prep). Individual differences in toddlers’ word-context associations and semantic knowledge.</p>

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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Talks	<p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (2024). Environmental context scaffolds children’s semantic representations of novel words. Talk presented at <i>Boston University Conference on Language Development</i>: Boston, MA.</p> <p><b>*Breitfeld, E.,</b> **Compton, A., &amp; Saffran, J. (2024). Toddlers’ prior social experience with speakers influences word learning. Talk presented in Symposium “Examining the socioemotional dynamics of early language learning” at <i>International Congress of Infant Studies</i>: Glasgow, Scotland.</p> <p>* Symposium Chair</p> <p>** Student mentee, co-first author</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (2022). Physical environments that highlight objects’ distinct features support word learning. Talk presented at <i>Boston University Conference on Language Development</i>: Boston, MA.</p>
Posters	<p><b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> LaTourette, A., Waxman, S. &amp; Saffran, J. (2025). The effect of category composition on infants’ memory of object features. Poster at <i>Society for Research in Child Development 2025 Biennial Meeting</i>: Minneapolis, MN.</p> <p>*Franco, X., <b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (2025). The role of category formation in how infants distinguish between object features. Poster at <i>National Conference on Undergraduate Research</i>: Pittsburgh, PA.</p> <p>* Student mentee</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (2024). The role of environmental context in scaffolding children’s word meanings. Poster at <i>Cognitive Development Society Biennial Meeting</i>: Pasadena, CA.</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.</b> &amp; Saffran, J. (2022). Word learning in environments that highlight distinct features of objects. Poster at <i>International Congress of Infant Studies</i>: Ottawa, CA.</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> Weaver, H., &amp; Lupyan, G. (2022). Parent generic language input about categories in a sample of North American English. Poster at <i>Cognitive Development Society 2022 Biennial Meeting</i>: Madison, WI.</p> <p><b>Breitfeld, E.,</b> Potter, C., &amp; Lew-Williams, C. (2019). Investigating children’s learning at multiple levels from shared reading. Poster at <i>Cognitive Development Society 2019 Biennial Meeting</i>: Louisville, KY.</p>

## INVITED TALKS

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2025	<b>Social and Moral Learning Lab</b> , University of Wisconsin-Madison
2022	<b>Infant and Child Development Center</b> , Northwestern University
	<b>Cognitive Origins Lab</b> , University of Wisconsin-Madison

## TEACHING

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2025 – 2026	Instructor, Psychology of Language (Psych 601)
2024	Teaching Assistant, Research Methods (Psych 225)
2022, 2023	Teaching Assistant, Child Development (Psych 460)
	<i>Guest Lecture</i> : Early Word Learning

## MENTORING & OUTREACH EXPERIENCE

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<b>Mentorship</b>	2025 – 2026	McNair Scholar: <i>Howard Owens</i>
	2025 – 2026	Honors Thesis Student: <i>Howard Owens</i>
	2024 – 2025	Center for Educational Opportunity Scholar: <i>Ximena Franco</i>
	2024 – 2025	Honors Thesis Student: <i>Courtney Snoberger</i>
	2024	Honors Summer Research Apprentice: <i>Amari Talluri-Boye</i>
	2023	Honors Summer Research Apprentice: <i>Rayane Prado Nunes</i>
	2023	MMSD High School Science Research Internship Mentor
	2023	UW-Madison LASER Student: <i>Howard Owens</i>
	2022 – 2023	Undergraduate Research Scholar: <i>Rayane Prado Nunes</i>
	2021 – 2022	Honors Thesis Student: <i>Anna Compton</i>
<b>Outreach</b>	2021	Talaria Summer Research Institute Mentor
	2025	UnityPoint Health Meriter Baby Hour, Guest Speaker on infant language learning
	2020-2025	Early Childhood Program Lead Teacher, UW Odyssey Project, Odyssey Junior

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

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2021 – 2023	Psychology Department Climate and Diversity Committee
2021 – 2024	Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders (SRCLD) Committee
2020 – 2024	Psychology Department Colloquium Series Committee, Chair (2021-2023)

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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Cognitive Development Society  
International Congress of Infant Studies  
Society for Language Development  
Society for Research in Child Development